



State Capitol | Lansing, Michigan 48913

PH (517) 373.1801 | FAX (517) 373.5801

www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/hardiman/

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Contact: Robyn Heron
517-373-1801

Sen. Hardiman brings Senate panel to Grand Rapids to hear local comments about graduation requirements

LANSING — Sen. Bill Hardiman announced today that he will host the Senate Education Committee in Kent County on Feb. 9 to listen to concerns of residents about proposed high school graduation requirements.

“I wanted Grand Rapids-area residents have an opportunity to offer their thoughts about this important change to Michigan’s educational system,” Hardiman said. “I like much of what I’ve heard so far about making our state’s graduation standards more rigorous, but I want to hear more.”

The hearing will be at 7 p.m., Thursday, at the Kent County Intermediate School District’s Educational Service Center, 2930 Knapp NE, in Grand Rapids. (Note: The address has changed from previous announcements.)

The Senate is considering a proposal from the state superintendent and State Board of Education that would implement graduation requirements beyond the half year of civics class now required. The plan would require students to take certain courses and a certain number of years, or equivalent credit, in different subjects:

- Four of English;
- Four of math, including Algebra I and II, and geometry;
- Three of science, including a year of biology, and either physics or chemistry;
- Three of social science, including half-year each of civics and economics, and a year each of U.S. and world history;
- Two of foreign language;
- One of health and physical education; and,
- One of visual or performing arts.

Michigan is among a handful of states that have minimal statewide graduation requirements. In Michigan, graduation requirements are left to local school boards.

All neighboring Great Lakes states already have statewide graduation requirements. And contrary to negative stereotypes about educational quality in the South, many Southern states now have some of the most rigorous requirements. States such as Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia and South Carolina require four years (or equivalent credit) of English and math, and three or four years of science

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